

**The Gambia Environmental Awards Scheme:
Creating Environmental Awareness Through Participation**

February 1997

**GreenCOM
Environmental Education and Communication Project
Contract Nos. PCE-5839-C-00-3068-00 and PCE-5839-Q-00-3069-00**



This publication was prepared for USAID/The Gambia by the Environmental Education and Communication (GreenCOM) Project. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this document do not reflect the official viewpoint of the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Written by:

Irma Allen

For more information contact:

GreenCOM Project
Academy for Educational Development
1255 23rd Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
USA

Tel: 202-884-8700

Fax: 202-884-8997

Email: greencom@aed.org

Website: <http://www.info.usaid.gov/environment/greencom>

Searchable Resource Library: <http://eelink.umich.edu/RESLIB/greencom.html>

GreenCOM is jointly funded and managed by the Center for Environment, Center for Human Capacity Development, and Office for Women in Development of the Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support, and Research of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and by USAID Regional Bureaus and Missions at collaborating sites. Technical services are provided by the Academy for Educational Development [Contract Nos. PCE-5839-C-00-3068-00 and PCE-5839-Q-00-3069-00] and its subcontractors: Chemonics International, Inc.; Global Vision, Inc.; the North American Association for Environmental Education; and with The Futures Group; PRC Environmental Management, Inc.; Porter/Novelli; and the World Resources Institute.

Cover photographs: Irma Allen

clockwise from top: Ministers and Heads of USAID and UNDP at National Awards Ceremonies with trophies, April 5, 1995; a truck full of prizes ready to be distributed to the divisions; and prize winners at Lower River Division.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Overview	1
Context: The Gambian Environment and Gambian Policy	2
The Awards Scheme: Social Mobilization at Work	4
Getting Organized	5
The Competition: Something for Everyone	8
Launching the Awards Scheme	10
Assessment: Was the Activity Done? How well?	12
The Winners	14
Bringing People Together: The Prize Ceremonies	18
Wrapping it Up: Lessons Learned	19
Next Steps	22
Appendices	
A: Timeline	
B: Entry Form	
C: Sample Advertisement	
D: EAS Certificate	
E: Prize List	

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Gambia's National Environmental Award Scheme stands out as a unique, rewarding experience for those of us who actively took part in it. This note of acknowledgement is to express deep thanks to all who made my participation in it possible: the GreenCOM and Chemonics home teams, and Dr. Anthony Meyer, GreenCOM Project Officer (AID/G/R&D/ED) who believed in the Awards Scheme and provided support and constant encouragement: and Rosemary Depp, Mission Director of USAID, who in the throes of Mission close-out negotiations and plans, still found time to actively support the project.

I appreciate the assistance and friendship which I received from the members of the National Awards Steering Committee, the Divisional Commissioners, the members of the Task Forces, and the many members of governmental and non-governmental organisations who participated in the implementation of the Scheme. I will always treasure the warmth and hospitality of the rural people and the time we spent together, visiting and sharing ideas late into the night.

Very deep thanks are given to the staff of the National Environment Agency (NEA) who all helped in various ways, and specially to Ndey Isatou Njie, Executive Director and Ndey Sireng Jobarteh, Environmental Education Programme Officer. These two amazing women are largely responsible for the successful implementation of the Environmental Awards Scheme, and it was truly a memorable experience and a pleasure to work with them.

Last, but not least, my deep appreciation to GreenCOM's Paula Tarnapol, Mona Grieser, and Martha Monroe who helped me put the document together so that this experience may be shared with others.

Overview

“Efforts such as the Environmental Awards Scheme build on Africa’s rich tradition of community and village-level consultations. Through such efforts, citizens show their willingness and ability to play a meaningful role in their own sustainable development.”

R. Depp, former USAID Mission Director, The Gambia

In 1994 and early 1995, the National Environment Agency in The Gambia designed and implemented an Environmental Award Scheme. In a short period of time, with limited financial resources and in a climate of political uncertainty, the competition captured the imagination of the country. Eight different awards categories engaged a wide range of individuals and groups. Because the competition took place at both regional and national levels, interest spread throughout the country.

The competition created an organizational infrastructure throughout the country that is being used in follow-up environmental planning and projects. The meetings, media coverage, posters, and other dissemination methods that were an integral part of the awards scheme proved an effective springboard for broader discussions on environmental problems and solutions, involving many more people than those who formally entered the competition. All this was accomplished with extremely limited financial resources and, after a July 1994 coup d’état, in an atmosphere of political uncertainty.

This case study describes how the awards scheme was organized and why it succeeded. It shares these lessons with readers interested in a general overview of the program, while also providing the details for those who wish to conduct their own awards program. Awards programs, in general, are excellent tools for generating awareness, sparking imagination, and building support. They are not typically used, however, as the only strategy for building awareness and education. Citizens may lack appropriate background information to understand what activities would qualify as “environmentally appropriate” or may generate a greater demand for environmental information or services than the facilitating agency can support. Awards programs are generally most powerful when used in social mobilization, in conjunction with teacher in-service programs, media campaigns, small grant programs, or other communication or education efforts.

Context: The Gambian Environment and Gambian Policy

The Gambia stretches along the River Gambia in West Africa. Natural and human influences have created serious environmental problems. Desertification, deforestation, erosion, and soil degradation are among the issues that affect daily life and future prospects for thousands of people in all parts of the country.

The Gambia had a population growth rate of about 3.4% in 1994, one of the highest in the world. Most of its one million inhabitants are employed in the agricultural sector, although migration to Banjul is increasing at an alarmingly fast rate. This, in turn, has exacerbated environmental and health concerns related to solid waste disposal, groundwater pollution, and the deterioration of infrastructure.

To address these and other environmental concerns, the Gambia Environmental Action Plan (GEAP), the country's national environmental strategy drafted in 1992, sets national priorities in the areas of natural resources, environmental health, and energy. Further, the GEAP identifies three cross-sectoral programs necessary to achieve these environmental objectives: 1) institutional and legislative framework development; 2) improved environmental information services; and 3) environmental education and public awareness. The GEAP states: "Well-intentioned programs for the protection of the environment and sustainable development of natural resources have failed to avert accelerated environmental degradation and natural resource depletion. A lack of public awareness of environmental issues remains a major constraint to the success of these programs."

To begin to address this shortcoming in public awareness, the National Environment Agency (NEA) (see Box 1) developed a social mobilization effort focusing on a National Environmental Award Scheme in 1994 and 1995. This effort was designed to build public awareness and mobilize participation across all levels and sectors of Gambian society. Competitions took place on divisional (regional) and national levels in eight different categories, including those relevant to schools, businesses, and voluntary organizations. More than 200 individuals and groups entered.

Many times that number of people were exposed to the scheme's messages of environmental awareness and action through media coverage, community meetings, the awards ceremonies, and other aspects of the project.

Contests are frequently used by public and private institutions in many countries to interest citizens in some current concern. Several factors were important to this award scheme's success:

Box 1: About the NEA

- ❑ Established in 1992 under the Office of Gambia's Head of State
- ❑ Coordinates environmental activities among public and private agencies
- ❑ Its staff of 25 has earned high credibility—important to its success in carrying out the awards scheme and other environmental initiatives..

❑ **Mobilization:** Participation by a wide range of individuals and groups was encouraged by developing a broad variety of competition categories and by building a media strategy for each step of the process. The award scheme became a major national event.

❑ **Decentralization:** Planning, implementing, communicating, and decision making took place at the local, regional, as well as the national, levels. District Environmental Task Forces were formed to carry out the scheme in The Gambia's six geographic divisions. They worked under the direction of the National Steering Committee, but with a great deal of autonomy.

❑ **Feasibility:** The small budget was decreased even further in July 1994, when a coup d'état resulted in reduced donor-funding for government initiatives. NEA spent approximately US\$5,000 on the scheme, primarily for publicity, fuel costs for the outreach vehicle, some of the prizes, and a portion of the assessment trips in the Divisions. Throughout the process, Gambian public and private organizations donated gasoline and other materials, lent vehicles and other equipment, and otherwise enabled the scheme to go forward with a minimum of funds. If these groups and individuals had not already agreed to support the program through the mobilization and decentralization described above, they probably would not have contributed their own limited resources to the Award Scheme's success.

❑ **Communication:** Throughout the whole scheme, NEA publicized each step of the process through the media, to the general public. At the same time, NEA communicated with the task forces, and they, in turn, with the communities. This two-way street encouraged active distribution of relevant information.

❑ **Time:** The Awards Scheme took place over a period of a year, thus there was sufficient time to create awareness, sensitize the public, mobilize resources, and build support.

Box 2: Keys to Success

❑ Mobilization

People throughout society and throughout the country were engaged

❑ Decentralization

Local and regional groups had power and authority

❑ Feasibility

Low cost and pooling of resources characterized the entire process

❑ Communication

All possible channels of communication were used systematically

❑ Time

There was sufficient time to sensitize the public, mobilize resources and build support

The Awards Scheme: Social Mobilization at Work

The success of many programs and efforts often lies in the degree to which the public accept the ideas, are excited by the opportunities, and are supportive of the goals. Social mobilization is a way of achieving this support. It is a very broad approach that gives ownership to the community as a whole and retains little “control.” A formal definition is provided in Box 3.

Author Neill McKee¹ succinctly summarizes the strategies of social mobilization as five approaches to mobilize human and financial resources as follows:

❑ **Political mobilization** wins political and policy commitment for a goal; the targets are national decision makers;

❑ **Government mobilization** informs and enlists the cooperation and help of government organizations which can provide direct or indirect support;

❑ **Community mobilization** informs and gains the commitment of local political, religious, social, and traditional leaders, NGOs, women’s groups, and others;

❑ **Corporate mobilization** secures the support of national or international companies in promoting appropriate goals;

❑ **Beneficiary mobilization** informs and motivates the program beneficiaries through training, establishment of groups, etc.

Box 3: Social mobilization

Social mobilization is the process of bringing together all feasible and practical inter-sectoral social allies to raise people’s awareness of and demand for a particular development program, to assist in the delivery of resources and services, and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self-reliance. *McKee*

By most accounts, social mobilization programs attempt to build national consensus. To do so, programs carry out a national education campaign through all possible channels, gearing up quickly and spreading the word. There is an assumption that by energizing more people to pay attention to some problem, good things will happen. Critics claim that accelerated programs are unsustainable approaches to long-term problems. Social mobilizers respond that these campaigns are merely the peaks in a continuous process of working toward the goal; that publicizing one event or program can have a positive impact on other programs; and that by involving the community in the energy of this process will have far-reaching benefits that are not easily gained through other avenues. The National Environmental Awards Scheme is an example of social mobilization. The ways in which it used each of the five strategies listed above is told in the following pages.

¹McKee, Neill. 1992. *Social Mobilization and Social Marketing in Developing Countries: Lessons for Communicators*. Penang: Southbound.

Getting Organized

Establishing National Objectives

The National Environment Agency established five objectives for the awards scheme:

- ▶ Increase environmental awareness among the public
- ▶ Promote and encourage public participation in environmental activities
- ▶ Promote environmentally friendly technology among relevant business and groups
- ▶ Demonstrate government recognition of individual and community efforts
- ▶ Reward individuals and groups taking positive environmental action

To achieve these objectives, NEA identified potential partners, established a coordinating mechanism to link these partners, and built support among target audiences. NEA wanted to carry out the scheme with a minimum of expenditure (using available resources and infrastructure) and maximum participation from the community at large.

The NEA Executive Director formed an Environmental Awards Steering Committee with representatives from organizations that ranged from The Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) to the Ministries of Education, Interior, and Health. A total of 14 individuals served on the committee. NEA served as the facilitator and secretariat (see Box 4).

Box 4: The Environmental Award Scheme Steering Committee

NEA (Facilitator and Secretariat)
Ministry of Interior (Community Development)
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Trade and Employment
Ministry of Natural Resources (Wildlife Department)
Ministry of Agriculture (Soil/Water Monitoring Unit, Communication Unit, Livestock Services)
Greater Banjul and Kanifing Municipalities
Women's Bureau
Gambia Technical Training Institute
Association of NGO's (TANGO)
Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The Steering Committee had many tasks during its tenure. It first modified and approved the plan for the whole process, including the eight awards categories. It also discussed the choice of a logo and the entry forms for the competition designed by the NEA. Once the Divisional Task

Forces were constituted, the Steering Committee defined their role, guiding their activities, and monitoring their progress. The Committee was largely responsible for the media campaign, helping to design and implement it. The Committee also participated in the development of the judging system and discussed the types of prizes to be awarded. Some members of the Steering Committee took an active role visiting projects as part of a sub-committee which reviewed all the top entries in each Division for the selection of the national winners.

Decentralizing the Scheme: the Divisional Task Forces

The NEA next approached the Commissioners, the heads of government of the country's five regional divisions, to request that they serve as focal points for the award scheme in their areas. All five agreed to appoint Environmental Task Forces to operate the program. While the task forces used the logo, entry forms, and other materials developed centrally, they had autonomy and decision-making power in determining how the scheme would unroll in their divisions (see Box 5). Although some variations existed among the Divisions, the task forces generally included the following members:

- ▶ Divisional Commissioner
- ▶ Assistant Divisional Commissioner
- ▶ Natural Resources Officer
- ▶ Divisional Health Team Officer
- ▶ Divisional Agricultural Coordinator
- ▶ Divisional Education Officer
- ▶ Divisional Forestry Superintendent
- ▶ Community Development Officer
- ▶ Field Officer of NGOs, such as Save the Children, Action Aid, and the Child Support and Rural Development Agency (CYSARDA)
- ▶ Divisional Councilors (including Chiefs)

Box 5: Building Links across The Gambia

Government Ministries	Environmental Awards Scheme Steering Committee	NGO's
National Environmental Management Council	NEA	Mass Media USAID/GreenCOM UNDP
Divisional EAS Task Forces (5)		Subcommittee for EAS Greater Banjul Area & National Winners
CBO's	Schools	Individuals
Women	Students	Commerce
Youth	Teachers	Municipalities
Farmers	Religious Heads	Industry

The Competition: Something for Everyone

Eight different categories of competition were established to encourage participation from every element of Gambian society—young and old; women and men; rural and urban; industry and microenterprises; government and NGOs; groups and individuals. Thus, the following types of activities qualified: school clean-ups, dramatists' performances, entrepreneurs' inventions, and neighbourhoods' "clean" income-generating projects, and others.

Broad criteria guided what types of projects were eligible within the eight categories:

- ▶ environmental rehabilitation activities
- ▶ activities that enhance the environment through sound and/or innovative natural resource management, education, or energy use;
- ▶ achievements of individuals or groups that have campaigned, championed, or advocated for environmental causes.

The major reason for holding eight different competitions simultaneously was to maximize the number of people who could enter. The categories were chosen to focus attention on environmental priorities which needed greater public participation, e.g., sanitation, sustainable agriculture, use of appropriate technology, reforestation, land rehabilitation, and sustainable development. A competition for women was provided to create an incentive for women's groups (typically formed to create income-generating projects) to become environmentally sensitive. Ultimately, these groups might integrate environmentally appropriate strategies with profitable projects.

Another important consideration was to promote activities that people would not only want to do, but also would be able to do given their existing resources, such as time and equipment.

The individual competitions were broad in scope to allow innovation and more equitable participation. At one point, more specific activities for schools were discussed, but the Committee believed the schools with greater resources might out-compete those with fewer materials and money, and choose to keep the competition accessible to all.

Finally, the competitions were designed to generate activities in three broad, priority areas:

- ▶ clean and beautiful surroundings
- ▶ appropriate technology and sustainable development, and
- ▶ clean and safe industry and enterprise.

Below is a list of the eight award categories, their target groups, and possible activities:

Box 6: Award Categories		
Category	Eligible Participants	Eligible Activities
1. Clean Schools, Clean Surroundings	Schools and other educational institutions	Clean-ups on school grounds or the surrounding community
2. Clean Ward	Groups, associations, the public at large	Clean-ups within the ward or surrounding community
3. Women and Environment	Women's groups and associations	Environmentally sustainable projects, i.e. tree planting or cooperative vegetable gardens
4. Community Sustainable Development	Individuals, groups, and associations	Environmentally sound innovations that improve the quality of life
5. Appropriate Technology	Individuals	Environmentally friendly technology that facilitates work of any kind
6. Clean Business and/or Industry	Companies and industries	Clean technology, appropriate waste disposal, clean and safe premises
7. Clean Enterprise	Businessmen and businesswomen	Clean technology, appropriate waste disposal, clean and safe premises
8. Advocacy and Promotion	Individuals not employed in the environment sector	Project that promotes environmental issues on locally, regionally, or nationally

Launching the Awards Scheme

The Head of State officially launched the Scheme in April 1994, at a meeting of the National Environment Management Council. At the same time, NEA introduced a logo, entry forms (Appendix B and C), and posters in Banjul and in the Divisions.

The NEA Executive Director and Environmental Education Officer visited all five Division Commissioners to enlist their participation and assistance and to plan how to publicize the Scheme regionally. These visits proved fruitful. In each case, the Commissioner decided to form and chair a task force to implement the Scheme in his division.

NEA also embarked on two major publicity activities at the national level: a multi-media outreach program and a media campaign. NEA worked with the Agriculture Communication Unit on the outreach program. Using the Communication Unit's vehicle and a portable generator, a team visited 35 villages and held meetings, displayed posters, and played films and cassette tapes with environmental themes. More than 6,000 people attended the various meetings, more than 25 percent of whom were women and about 10 percent of whom were youth. These meetings provided general information on environmental topics and then introduced the awards scheme. The team reported lively question-and-answer sessions, many with community members who had never before had a discussion about the environment with a government official.

As part of a media campaign, NEA regularly provided articles to the newspapers. In addition, the agency, with the assistance of a local consultant, developed a series of interactive radio programs broadcast through Radio One FM, a popular private radio station. A team from NEA, including the Executive Director, answered questions phoned in by listeners in a format that proved highly successful.

Each Divisional Environmental Task Force planned the publicity in its own Division. This meant that each plan responded to local audiences and local media channels. Following are some examples of the different kinds of media activities:

☐ **Promoting to Farmers**

The Upper Division Task Force held meetings for farmers about the impact of agriculture, livestock, and forestry on natural resources and about the Scheme. In addition to interest in the competition, the meetings resulted in specific village requests for follow-up meetings on environmental protection.

☐ **Working through Community Leaders**

Box 7: Tools to Spread the Word

- ☐ Outreach vehicles
- ☐ Mass media
- ☐ Farmers meetings
- ☐ Community leadership
- ☐ Youth meetings
- ☐ Resource user groups
- ☐ Meetings with school teachers and/or administrators
- ☐ Interpersonal Communication

The MacCarthy Island Division Commissioner invited community leaders to a special meeting to discuss the Scheme. Guests included religious leaders, local officials, and representatives of youth and women's groups. The Commissioner explained the Scheme and asked these key individuals to support the Scheme through their channels.

□ Appealing to User Groups

The Western Division invited NEA to set up an exhibit at the National Livestock Show to display logos, posters, and other information. The NEA staff answered questions on the Scheme and distributed entry forms.

□ Focusing on School Administrators

In the North Bank Division, the Commissioner convened a meeting for primary and middle school headmasters to introduce them to the scheme and encourage them to initiate activities in their schools.

□ Multiplying Efforts through Teachers

In Greater Banjul, a meeting was held with teachers about the awards scheme, where the discussion turned to the role that teachers play in helping students acquire the concepts, skills, and attitudes needed to interact wisely with the environment. Teachers also asked about the role of the NEA.

Word spread beyond the people actually attending the meetings, listening to the radio, or otherwise participating in publicity activities. For example, students in several schools organized clubs and initiated school-wide activities. Indeed, at the end of April, when an NEA team made follow-up visits to all five divisions, they found that most traditional and religious leaders, *alkalos* (mayors), women's groups, youth groups, and others knew about the awards scheme and its objectives.

Assessment: Was the Activity Done? How Well?

Assessment consisted of two steps: verification to ensure that what was reported on the entry form actually took place; and judging, to determine which activities merited prizes.

Designing an Assessment Strategy

NEA developed a verification procedure and judging criteria for the Steering Committee. The Committee decided that the Divisional Task Forces should judge the entries, using the common criteria (see Box 8), rather than forwarding the entries to national decision makers. NEA produced uniform judging forms and met with each task force to train for the assessment process and begin making plans for prize presentations.

Each meeting followed a similar pattern:

- ☐ review of the progress of the Scheme
- ☐ discussion of how to carry out field visits to verify and judge each entry
- ☐ distribution of judging forms and training on how to use them
- ☐ schedule the assessment
- ☐ discussion of the prize-giving
- ☐ discussion of a general time frame

Each Divisional Task Force then carried out its assessment using its own resources. Again, perhaps because the task forces had ownership in the process, and were given real decision-making authority, they were willing to spend their own money on travel and other expenses.

Each Division carried out the assessment slightly differently. The MacCarthy Island Task Force divided up the entries among the group. For example, the Education Officer was primarily responsible for visiting schools, interviewing the participants, observing the impact of the environmental activities on the school, and completing the judging form. In the Western Division, the entire task force created a grid to judge each entry as a group. In the Greater Banjul Area, an assessment team spent an average of four hours visiting each entry. Interestingly, while the committee members visiting schools reported some difficulty in differentiating among the many school clean-up activities, they had no hesitation in selecting the winners, which went far and beyond clean-up and beautification activities.

Box 8: Four Major Criteria

- ☐ **Degree of participation** For a group, the percentage that participated. For an individual, the level of commitment and motivation exhibited
- ☐ **Cleanliness** of the activity: did appropriate solid waste disposal, reuse, recycling take place?
- ☐ **Magnitude** of the activity: did it cover a large area or population, or deal with several environmental issues?
- ☐ **Sustainability** Has this, or will this, become an ongoing activity?

Each Division selected first-place winners in each category and, if there were sufficient high-quality entries, second and third places. The names of the top three overall winners (regardless of category) were then submitted to the National Steering Committee as candidates for the national prizes. A subcommittee was constituted to visit each of the finalists' projects to observe the activity, interview participants, and seek opinions from others in the community about the impact of the activity. The National Steering Committee reviewed the subcommittee's findings and selected the three national winners.

The Steering Committee decided that the prizes should be appropriate tools or other equipment to allow the winners to continue with their work--wheelbarrows, watering cans, gardening tools, and the like (for a complete list, see Appendix E). The winners also received certificates, and each entrant received a letter of appreciation for having participated. Funds for prizes (\$25,000) were provided by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the United Nations Development Programme.

The Winners

In total, there were 210 entries. Of these, 94 were prize-winners who received certificates and tangible, useful prizes; the rest received letters of appreciation for their participation.

Each Division submitted their three top entries, regardless of category to the national competition. From these, the National Environmental Awards Steering Committee selected three national winners through actual visits to each of these projects. The prizes were determined through consultation with the recipients to ensure the prize would be valuable to them. In addition, each of them was nominated for UNEP's Global 500 Award.

The National Winners

Tahir Ahmaddiyya Muslim High School - A Model of Environmental Management
First Prize--A borehole

The students in this Lower River Division school have turned their school into a model of environmental management. They planted drought-tolerant trees, plants, and an orchard; collected rain water for use during the dry season; used organic fertilizers in the gardens and making compost; and established a waste disposal system with recycling measures. In addition, they established an Environment Club which produces drama on environmental issues for neighbouring schools and communities. This has been so successful that other schools in the area are copying the idea. The school is relatively small, with 450 students.

Touba Taffsir Village Community - Preventing Bush Fires
Second Prize--A Participatory Rural Appraisal Study to collectively determine priorities for the expenditure of nearly US\$5,000

This Jahanka farming village in Upper River Division has been collectively managing their environment (a large forest, livestock grazing area, and an orchard) around their village for the last 18 years, primarily by preventing bushfires. At the end of each rainy season, the village Imam (Muslim leader) and the elders of the village mobilize the community in bushfire control measures, including fire belts and fire tracing. If by accident there is a fire, the entire village is mobilized to control it. The village and surrounding area are in outstanding condition. The government and others in the Gambian civil society are now trying to integrate this approach into other natural resources management programs.

Somita Kambeg Kafo - Community Sanitation, Health, and Environment Improvements
Third Prize--Fencing materials for their garden

This kafo (group) consists of about 200 women in Somita Village in Western Division, who are successfully carrying out an environmental health program that involves regular cleaning of the village and proper waste management. The kafo also established an environmentally-

friendly garden, where compost is used and water is conserved. Through songs and drama, the women in the kafo teach others in the community about sanitation and the environment, while providing entertainment.

Additional Entries

Following are examples of entries in each category. Every category did not draw equally from every region of the country. As Box 9 indicates, some categories attracted more entries from rural areas, and other categories from urban areas.

Box 9: Categories of Entries by Region		
<u>Category</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>
Women in Environment	high	low
Sustained Development	high	low
Clean/Safe Business	low	high
Appropriate Technology	low	high

1. Clean School and Clean Surroundings: Bakau Newtown Primary School

More than 1,000 students, teachers, and parents worked together to maintain a school garden and compost pile; plant fruit trees and flowers; promote an inter-classroom clean-up competition; and clean the area surrounding the school. Families contributed money to purchase plaster and paint for the classrooms and additional trees and plants.

2. Enhanced Ward: Serrakunda East Kafo

Serrakunda is a peri-urban area with a very high population density in the Greater Banjul area. There are many street vendors and limited street cleaning services. The Serrakunda East Kafo consists of a group of people, mostly women, who have organized themselves to systematically clean and protect an area surrounding their homes. They provide and maintain refuse bins, sweep the compounds, supervise the proper disposal of human waste, and plant trees and other plants to keep the area clean and attractive.

3. Women and Environment: Women's Cooperative Crop Production

A women's association in Jamwelle Village mobilized 70 people to work together on a year-round gardening, tree-planting, and a sheep and poultry project. All these activities were complementary. For example, the poultry ate leaves from planted leucaenia trees; chicken manure was used to fertilize the vegetable garden; and both the vegetables and the poultry are used to improve the diet of the community.

4. Community Sustainable Development: The Sea Defense Project

Banjul's Muslim community reduced coastal erosion around the community's cemetery. Rallied by a committee led by the Imam (religious leader), thousands of Muslims filled in a cliff face with boulders and wire reinforcement. Community members donated money to purchase materials and volunteered their time. Men, women, and children worked side by side over a period of seven weeks depositing roughly 1944 cubic meters of boulders.. The magnitude of the initiative was so great, that the government agreed to maintain the cliffs.

5. Appropriate Technology: New Horizons Technologies

Another project related to coastal erosion took a very different approach. Sand mining to make construction blocks has depleted many beaches. New Horizons Technologies, a family-owned company, began experimenting with making blocks out of laterite dust and cement. The company has purchased two presses and is manufacturing and promoting the blocks.

6. Clean, Safe Business/Industry: Shell Marketing Gambia Ltd.

This unusual entry came from one of Gambia's few large companies. The project consisted of building a new airplane fuel depot at Yundum airport to increase the storage capacity. The facility, which was in the last stages of construction, is impressive because of the many human and environmental protection measures which were incorporated in its design. Among these are: (1) a drainage system for the collection of all possible leakage and spillage which could occur during operations; (2) warning equipment; (3) emergency shut-down devices; (4) effective communication system; (5) fire-fighting system; (6) staff-training for safety. The sub-committee of the National Environmental Awards Steering Committee which visited these premises had no idea that such modern environmental-protection measures were operating within the country. The Award Scheme helped to publicize this worthy endeavor which can serve as a model for other industries and businesses.

7. Clean Enterprise: Awa Camara

This woman is a market vendor who sells vegetables in a large, congested market. Awa ensures that her stall has a container (usually a used cardboard box) for disposal of old vegetable leaves and other such waste. She also has a plastic bucket which she used to fetch water from the faucet to wash her vegetables. She then discards the water in the nearest drain. As a result, her stall is clean, dry, and attractive.

8. Advocacy and Promotion: Njogu Touray

Njogu Touray is a well-known Gambian artist, whose concern about environmental protection grew out of his appreciation for the beauty of nature. Increasingly, his vivid, bold paintings have focused on pointing out environmental degradation caused through human activity. He also became concerned about lead paint and other environmentally-degrading materials used by artists, and thus, has spent the last five years experimenting with natural resins, instead of plastic sprays,

and using natural pigments for his paintings. He is hoping to produce a booklet on natural art materials of The Gambia for one of the next Award Schemes.

Bringing People Together: The Prize Ceremonies

The Steering Committee awarded in-kind prizes, not cash, to regional and national winners as visible incentives to others to participate in the future. Prizes such as wheelbarrows, rubbish bins, tools, sports equipment, and other items will help contestants continue their activities. NEA purchased these items, as well as certificates, plaques, and trophies.

Each Division organized and conducted a large, public celebration to award the prizes to winners, with people often traveling long distances to take part. A team from the NEA, including one or two members from the National Steering Committee, delivered the prizes to the Divisions and participated in the awards ceremonies. The NEA Media Officer telephoned a report to radio and newspapers in Banjul at the end of each ceremony. However, the agency could not provide funds for the ceremonies themselves.

These ceremonies provided a way for different groups to come together to support a common cause. For example, the event in the Western Division brought together all the Division's chiefs for the first time since the District Commissioner had taken office.

The participants included regional authorities, traditional and religious leaders, prize-winners, friends, school children, and music and drumming groups. The regional leaders were involved in presenting the prizes and making the presentations. There was much rejoicing, dancing, drumming, and the prizes were well-appreciated. As the truck loaded with the prizes went along the road, or stopped to wait at a ferry crossing, people would approach it, cheer, and clap.

The National Awards Ceremony took place jointly with the opening of a workshop to launch the National Environmental Education Strategy. The Minister of Agriculture served as master of ceremonies, and the Minister of Education read a message on behalf of the Head of State. Two other cabinet Ministers also attended. The country representatives of both USAID and UNDP made presentations. Most of the Divisional Commissioners were present, and so were many dignitaries and members of the business community and NGOs. At this event, the prizes for the Greater Banjul winners and for the three national winners were presented.

A broad cross-section of people engaged both in formal and non-formal environmental education, including the members of the National Environmental Awards Steering Committee, remained at the site for a two-day workshop to review and approve the proposed National Environmental Education Strategy.

Box 10: Lower River Division Awards Ceremony

- ☐ Arrival of guests and winners
- ☐ Introduction by Task Force Chairman
- ☐ Welcome by District Commissioner
- ☐ Remarks by USAID Representative
- ☐ Keynote by NEA Executive Director
- ☐ Presentation of Prizes
- ☐ Vote of Thanks by a Chief
- ☐ Drumming and Dancing
- ☐ Departure

Wrapping It Up: Lessons Learned

As noted earlier, several factors contributed meaningfully to the success of the National Environmental Awards Scheme: widespread mobilization, decentralization of decision making and authority, feasibility in terms of expectations and resources, open communication, and sufficient time.

Additional lessons learned include the following:

❑ **The planning and steering of the Scheme was done collaboratively.** Through the National Steering Committee, representatives from government (the Ministries of Education, Health, Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Interior) and non-governmental organizations helped plan, steer, and monitor the Scheme.

❑ **There was strong support from the public media.** The newspapers and radio reported the process. A series of interactive radio programs provided information and maintained public interest during the implementation phase of the Scheme.

❑ **There was full involvement of the National Environment Agency.** From the Director to the typists, the entire staff had a stake in the success of the Scheme. All had different roles to play; each performed his or her role with a high level of commitment and enthusiasm.

❑ **NEA played a facilitating and coordinating role.** The Agency has good credibility, and the various Ministries, NGOs, and Division authorities fully accepted NEA's role as the facilitator and coordinator of the Scheme.

❑ **Divisional Task Forces had the responsibility for implementing the Award Scheme regionally.** These Task Forces, headed by the Divisional Commissioner, were composed of government extension officers, regional representatives of NGOs, and traditional leaders. Because these people live and work in the regions, they knew the specific environmental problems and were in positions to influence others.

❑ **There was strong cooperation and support from government, donor agencies, and the community.** The members of the Divisional Task Forces, in particular, gave of their time, voluntarily, adding arduous tasks to an already full schedule. In addition, they shared other limited resources. NEA, as noted, supported the process, and USAID and UNDP funded purchases of prizes.

❑ **Winners received in-kind prizes.** Providing wheelbarrows, tools, equipment, fencing, and even a well for the top prize winner was better than giving cash prizes. It resulted in the distribution of vital tools and equipments to groups which could use them, and it provided visual incentive to others to enter future competitions.

A Few Difficulties

There were several challenges in the development of this particular awards scheme. Though not all would be present in other situations, other concerns will need to be overcome.

❑ **Coup d'état:** Without a doubt, the greatest problem encountered was the coup d'état which took place about four months into the development of the awards program. An attempted counter-coup took place immediately after. This transition caused great political uncertainty and therefore, a delay of several months as some donor-funded projects closed. Funds and equipment that were to come through USAID's GreenCOM Project were no longer available. In addition, the Divisional Commissioners (the heads of the Divisional Task Forces) were replaced. It was thus necessary to repeat the process of consultations with the Commissioners to gain their support and commitment to continue to lead their Task Force.

❑ **Transportation:** Although The Gambia is a small country, transportation is difficult. The roads are very poor in places, and ferry crossings are inevitable. Crossing small rivers and creeks was arduous at best, and sometimes dangerous, particularly when carrying prizes to the recipients.

❑ **Limited regional facilities:** The Divisional Headquarters had very limited facilities. Thus, entry forms, certificates, assessment forms, etc. had to be produced in Banjul at the National Environment Agency and taken to the Divisions. Every opportunity was taken to "catch" people who were going "up-country" and use them as messengers.

❑ **Limited financial resources:** Although the aim was to implement the campaign through existing infrastructure and resources, funds to assist with transportation and to pay for more radio time would have enabled more publicity. The Divisions also placed a great deal of importance on the prize-giving ceremonies, but no funds were available through the secretariat. In spite of this, the Task Forces went ahead, utilizing existing resources and events, and organized large ceremonies with full representation of the people and dignitaries in each region. These ceremonies became important support-building occasions, which in future should be included in the budget.

Spin-offs and Extensions

Several additional programs and projects have resulted from the awards scheme.

❑ An infrastructure (The Environmental Task Forces) was created at the regional level which is now being used for the decentralization of environmental management.

❑ The Awards Scheme created an opportunity for staff from NEA and other Ministries to be closely involved with "grassroots" environmental concerns and endeavors. This resulted in stronger links and goodwill for NEA and other institutions in the Steering Committee.

❑ Many of the participants in the Divisions actually requested visits from extension agents to enlist help with their projects. This provided opportunities for extension officers to meet the expressed needs, rather than the more typical case of planning workshops around topics they think will be useful to residents.

❑ The lessons learned from the Awards Scheme are being applied to other social mobilization activities, such as the Participatory Rural Appraisals being carried out to develop regional and local action plans.

Next Steps

Perhaps the greatest impact of the scheme is what will happen to future environmental activities. Will the individuals and groups who entered the scheme sustain their projects? Will they be joined by others? Or will interest decline? To date, several events have occurred that bode well:

- ▶ NEA secured funding and successfully completed the second Environmental Awards Scheme. Over 300 entries were received (a third more than in the first Scheme). At this printing, the third Awards Scheme has been launched with great enthusiasm.
- ▶ Shell Oil Company, a winner in the first competition, contributed to the prizes in the second awards scheme.
- ▶ An additional category is being created for ecotourism to encourage environmental activities among hotels and tourist organizations.
- ▶ The National Environmental Award Scheme is now a yearly event, culminating on World Environment Day. It is an accepted strategy to encourage environmental awareness and participation.
- ▶ NEA staff all agree that the scheme is becoming easier to implement because the infrastructure is in place and the facilitators have learned from past experience.
- ▶ NEA has used the publicity campaign strategies developed for the scheme in subsequent endeavors. For example, in informing importers and others in the agricultural sector about a newly-passed pesticide registration law, NEA embarked on a media campaign that included interactive radio programs and community meetings.
- ▶ The National Awards Steering Committee and the Divisional Task Forces, which were formed to guide and facilitate the Awards Scheme, did not end after the first prize-giving. Instead, they began working to implement the National Environmental Education Strategy and have agreed to continue to facilitate the Environmental Award Scheme on a yearly basis at the regional level. The National Steering Committee was given a few new members and converted into the National Environmental Education Steering Committee. The Divisional Task Forces work with NEA and, after training for some of its members in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques, are assisting in drawing up local environmental action plans in their areas. (One of the first PRAs carried out was in Tabu Taffsir Community, one of the national winners, to help it determine what assistance it needed as its prize.)

The National Environmental Award Scheme in The Gambia is not a perfect model. Like all successful programs, it worked well in the context in which it was planned and implemented. For example, the country is small, and although transportation is scarce, a few media vehicles can

cover much of it. Leadership, flexibility, and a commitment to a better environment, however, commodities which exist in countries large and small, can create the conditions for an awards scheme to engage people in environmental improvement.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Timeline
- Appendix B: Entry form
- Appendix C: Sample news ad
- Appendix D: Certificate
- Appendix E: List of Prizes

Appendix A: Timeline

The following schedule of NEA activities outline the implementation of the National Environmental Award Scheme (1994-95).

January	Design the Environmental Awards Scheme. Send initial press release. Draft and mail letters to the facilitators of Award Scheme Competitions to enlist their assistance and invite them to a planning meeting.
February	Meet with representatives of the facilitating institutions and organizations. Meet with the public media. Form the National Environmental Award Scheme Steering Committee. Visit each Division to explain the Award Scheme to Commissioners and enlist their assistance. Co-opt the assistance of extension services and NGOs which have field workers to publicize the Award Scheme and assist with entries.
March	Prepare materials: entry form, logo, award certificates, posters, stickers, radio spots, etc. Determine prizes. Distribute entry forms and instructions on how they will be used. Launch publicity through radio, newspapers, extension services. Visit each Division to make appraisal of process. Meet with facilitators to check on progress.
April	Confirm prizes. Launch another publicity campaign to announce closing dates for entries.
June	Publicize World Environment Day and announce events. Close entries June 15. Check with facilitators and Commissioners to collect entries
July	Announce the number of entries received from each Division.

A military coup d'état took place July 22. There was a period of rapid staff turnover throughout the government. Divisional Commissioners were replaced. Several months elapsed before the entries could be judged. Nevertheless, NEA kept all communication channels open and the projects which had entered the competition continued their activities. Meetings were held with the new Divisional Commissioners who agreed to chair the task forces.

August	Design a draft judging procedure to assess each project on standard criteria.
--------	---

December	Meet with the National Steering Committee to review and approve the judging procedures and to make logistical plans for the Divisional and National assessment procedures.
January	Orient Divisional Task Forces on the verification and judging procedures. Consult on presentation of Divisional prizes.
February	Meet with National Award Scheme Steering Committee to review and approve the certificate for winners and prizes. Verify and judge at Divisional level.
March	Collect winning entries from the Divisions. Announce Division winners by radio. Continue news releases to keep the public informed of the developments. Meet with National Award Scheme Steering Committee to review and approve the plans to form committees to assess Greater Banjul entries. Verify and judge Greater Banjul entries. Meet with National Award Scheme Steering Committee to select national winners. Subcommittee appointed to visit each project. Verify and judge national entries. Plan prize-giving ceremonies with each Division. Receive funds and purchase prizes. Order certificates and trophies. Arrange transportation for prizes. Present prizes in each Division (March 20-24).
April	National prize-giving ceremony for Greater Banjul and national winners. Evaluation and follow-up meeting.

Appendix E:
Prizes for Each Category in the Competition

1. Enhanced School Surroundings
 - soccer ball
 - set of sports uniforms for soccer team
 - wheelbarrow
 - rubbish bin
 - rake
 - watering can
2. Enhanced Surroundings/Clean Ward
 - soccer ball
 - large wheelbarrow
 - small wheelbarrow
 - rubbish bin
 - shovel
 - 2 rakes
 - 2 watering cans
3. Women and Environment
 - large wheelbarrow
 - small wheelbarrow
 - rubbish bin
 - 4 watering cans
 - 2 sets of tools: pick, shovel, rake, cane knife
4. Community Sustainable Development
 - large wheelbarrow
 - small wheelbarrow
 - rubbish bin
 - 4 watering cans
 - 2 sets of tools: pick, shovel, rake, cane knife
5. Appropriate Technologies
 - set of workshop tools (drill, pliers, screwdrivers, etc.)
 - large pipe wrench
6. Clean/Safe Business or Industry
 - floating trophy or plaque (engraved)
 - rubbish bin
 - set of tools
7. Clean/Safe Enterprise
 - rubbish bin

large water storage container
wheelbarrow
tools for cleaning

8. Advocacy Promotion

floating trophy or plaque (engraved)
art supplies and materials

National Prizes

These were chosen in consultation with the winners to ensure that the prize winners received something which was valued and needed to support their environmental activities.

First Prize: A borehole and pump

Second Prize: A participatory rural appraisal study to collectively determine priorities for spending nearly US\$5,000 in community development funds

Third Prize: Fencing materials and tools for the vegetable garden